

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9582
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 11135

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR
SUBJECT: CHABAN-DELMAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE NATION-
AL ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY: JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE SECOND ROUND OF VOTING,
DEFEATING THE OFFICIAL RPR CANDIDATE AND INCUMBENT
EDGAR FAURE AS WELL AS THE PS AND PC CANDIDATES. HIS
ELECTION, IN THE FACE OF CHIRAC'S ALL-OUT SUPPORT OF
FAURE, IS A SETBACK FOR CHIRAC. CHABAN'S SUCCESS IS
ALSO HAILED AS A VICTORY FOR GISCARD IN THAT
CHABAN SHOULD BE MORE IN TUNE WITH GISCARDIAN OBJECTI-
VES, AND HIS VICTORY PREVENTED CHIRAC'S CONTROL OF THIS
KEY POSITION. BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN TO WHAT EXTENT
GISCARD WILL BE ABLE TO USE THIS FIRST POST-ELECTORAL
VICTORY IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS GOALS. END SUMMARY.

1. JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS, THE RPR CANDIDATE FOR PRESI-
DENT IN 1974 AND MAYOR OF BORDEAUX, OUTDISTANCED EDGAR
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FAURE, THE OFFICIAL RPR CANDIDATE, ON THE FIRST ROUND
OF VOTING, 153 TO 136. HIS VICTORY WAS BASED ON THE
NEARLY UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF THE UDF, COUPLED WITH A
LIMITED NUMBER OF GAULLISTS (APPROXIMATELY 20). FAURE
SUBSEQUENTLY WITHDREW FROM THE RACE AND CHABAN WAS ELEC-
TED ON THE SECOND ROUND, 276 VOTES TO 112 FOR THE PS
CANDIDATE MAUROY, AND 85 FOR THE PC CANDIDATE ANDRIEUX.

THE DOUBLE CANDIDACY IN THE LEFT IS A SIGN OF THE TIMES, THE LEFT HAVING PROPOSED A SINGLE CANDIDATE IN 1973. AS NO ONE HAD YET BEEN OFFICIALLY NAMED TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT (THE OFFICIAL NOTICE OF BARRE'S NOMINATION AS PRIME MINISTER WILL BE PUBLISHED TODAY AND THE CABINET NAMED TOMORROW EVENING), ALL OF THE DEPUTIES INCLUDING BARRE VOTED IN THE ELECTION.

2. CHIRAC LOSES: THE BATTLE FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAD RECEIVED A GREAT AMOUNT OF PUBLICITY AND WAS PRESENTED AS A TEST OF STRENGTH FOR JACQUES CHIRAC. WHILE BOTH CHABAN AND FAURE ARE GAULLISTS AND MEMBERS OF THE RPR, FAURE WAS SUPPORTED BY CHIRAC AND THE RPR LEADERSHIP, WHILE CHABAN WAS RUNNING AS AN INDEPENDENT, UNABLE TO OBTAIN THE RPR ENDORSEMENT. THE ENMITY BETWEEN CHABAN AND CHIRAC IS WELL KNOWN AND DATES FROM CHIRAC'S SUPPORT OF GISCARD AGAINST CHABAN IN 1974, WHICH SPLIT THE GAULLISTS AND GAVE GISCARD HIS CHANCE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. SINCE HIS SPLIT WITH CHIRAC, GISCARD HAS CULTIVATED CHABAN AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE MORE CENTRIST-LEANING RPR DEPUTIES. CHABAN HAS TAKEN LIBERAL POSITIONS IN TUNE WITH GISCARD, AND HIS VICTORY, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN UNLIKELY HAD THE GAULLISTS REMAINED UNITED, WAS AT LEAST A SYMBOLIC DEFEAT FOR CHIRAC. IT MUST BE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT CHABAN IS AN OLD AND DISTINGUISHED GAULLIST HIMSELF, AND HELD THE PRESIDENCY

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OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY UNDER DE GAULLE AND POMPIDOU (1958-1969) AND THE PRIME MINISTRY UNDER POMPIDOU (1969-1972). HE WAS SUPPORTED BY THE MAJORITY OF GAULLIST DEPUTIES IN HIS TRY FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1974, LACKING ONLY THOSE 43 BROUGHT TO GISCARD BY JACQUES CHIRAC. FAURE IS AN EX-RADICAL, WHO ONLY RECENTLY JOINED THE RPR. HE RECEIVED FEW IF ANY OF THE UDF VOTES. THE RADICAL SOCIALISTS REMEMBER ONLY TOO WELL HIS ATTEMPT LAST YEAR TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE RS SUPPORTED BY ITS PRO-RPR WING.

3. IN ADDITION TO AN ELECTORAL DEFEAT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE FACT THAT THE CONTEST EVEN TOOK PLACE REFLECTS SERIOUS ERRORS IN JUDGMENT BY CHIRAC. IN RESPONSE TO CRITICISM BY FELLOW GAULLISTS, CHABAN STATED THAT CHIRAC HAD ORIGINALLY ENCOURAGED HIS CANDIDACY, AND ONLY LATER SWITCHED TO FAURE. HE ACCUSED CHIRAC OF BETRAYING HIM AGAIN (A REFERENCE TO 1974) AND REFUSED TO WITHDRAW. CHIRAC CLAIMS THAT CHABAN MISUNDERSTOOD HIS COMMENTS. ACCORDING TO ONE EXPLANATION PROVIDED EMBOFFS, CHIRAC HAD ENCOURAGED CHABAN TO RUN THINKING THAT BARRE COULD BE THE UDF CANDIDATE. THUS CHIRAC ENCOURAGED CHA-

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BAN AS A CANDIDATE CAPABLE OF APPEALING TO A BROAD SPECTRUM. WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT GISCARD COULD NAME BARRE AS PRIME MINISTER, CHIRAC BEGAN HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE RPR ENDORSEMENT OF FAURE, WHO WAS ALSO A CANDIDATE, AND PREFERRED BY CHIRAC. IN ANY EVENT, CHIRAC'S ORIGINAL MISTAKE IN JUDGMENT CONCERNING GISCARD'S INTENTIONS, AND HIS ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN PARTY DISCIPLINE FOR HIS CHOICE, IN THE FACE OF AN OBVIOUS SPLIT WITHIN THE PARTY, RESULTED IN A SIGNIFICANT DEFEAT.

4. VICTORY FOR GISCARD: CHABAN-DELMAS' ELECTION, IN ADDITION TO BEING A DEFEAT FOR CHIRAC, REPRESENTS A VICTORY FOR GISCARD IN THAT CHABAN WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO SUPPORT GISCARD'S EFFORT TO USE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS A MEANS OF TEMPTING THE OPPOSITION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS AND VOTE FOR BILLS. WHILE CHABAN IS A GAULLIST AND THE RPR IS THE LARGEST GROUP IN THE MAJORITY CHABAN IS MORE GISCARDIAN IN HIS OUTLOOK THAN FAURE, AND

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WILL BE IN A POSITION TO AID RATHER THAN BLOCK GISCARDIAN OBJECTIVES. IN HIS FIRST REMARKS CHABAN NOTED THAT HE INTENDED TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF ALL THE ASSEMBLY WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION.

5. NUMBER THREE: THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS CONSIDERED THE THIRD MOST IMPORTANT POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT, AFTER THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER, AND IS THE FOURTH IN PROTOCOL AFTER THE PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY:

- DIRECTS AND CONTROLS THE DEBATE IN OPEN SESSION;
- NAMES THREE OF THE NINE MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL;
- MAY INTERVENE IN VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES TO ASSURE RESPECT FOR THE CONSTITUTION AND PUBLIC LAW, DECREES AND REGULATIONS; OR, MAY TAKE THE QUESTION TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY. CHABAN-DELMAS, AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DURING ITS FIRST ELEVEN YEARS OF EXISTENCE UNDER THE FIFTH REPUBLIC, MADE A REPUTATION FOR HIMSELF BY MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHILE UPHOLDING THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE PRESIDENCY;
- EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS THE ROLE OF "PATRON" OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE PRESIDENT, PARTICULARLY ONE AS WELL KNOWN AND EXPERIENCED AS CHABAN, EXERCISES SUBSTANTIAL PERSONAL INFLUENCE AND INFORMAL POWER THROUGH HIS ROLE AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE VARIOUS COMMISSIONS, WHICH DECIDES ON THE ASSEMBLY'S AGENDA.

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6. CONCLUSION: CHABAN'S VICTORY MARKS CHIRAC'S FIRST NOTEWORTHY DEFEAT SINCE HE TOOK CONTROL OF THE PARTY. WHILE CHABAN'S ELECTION IS THE FIRST SOLID CONSEQUENCE OF THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE DIMINISHED RPR POWER, IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN A PRO-GISCARDIAN BALANCE OF POWER IN THE MAJORITY. THE RPR IS STILL THE DOMINANT GROUP WITH 154 DEPUTIES TO THE UDF'S 123 (14 REMAIN INDEPENDENT OF EITHER GROUP). FOR THE MOMENT, GISCARD HAS ONLY SUCCEEDED IN NEUTRALIZING A POSITION WHICH FAURE, AS CHIRAC'S MAN, COULD HAVE USED AGAINST A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY (SELZING ON THE WINDFALL

THE CHABAN CANDIDACY PRESENTED) AND FORCED A CONFRONTATION WITH AND DEFEAT FOR CHIRAC THE FIRST DAY OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY (IN SPITE OF THREATENED RPR REPRISALS) MAY PORTEND A MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE POLICY BY THE GISCARDIANS THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST. CHABAN'S ELECTION HAS MARKED A STEP TOWARD WHAT THE UDF CALLS THE BLOSSOMING OF THE GISCARDIAN SPRING. THE NAMING OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT TOMORROW WILL BE THE NEXT STEP.
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